

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 0343

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SUBJECT: CABLE FROM VICENZA

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SUMMARY. EVEN IN PROSPEROUS CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC STRONGHOLD, COOPERATION WITH COMMUNISTS BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY APPEARS TO BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT MUCH ANGUISH. END SUMMARY.

1. CONGEN VISIT TO VICENZA LEADERS MARCH 3 REVEALED THAT BUSY AGRICULTURAL PROVINCE WITH MUCH DECENTRALIZED MEDIUM AND SMALL SIZE INDUSTRY DOING VERY WELL. MANUFACTURERS AS WELL AS PCI DESCRIBE VICENZA AS AN ISLAND OF PROSPERTY AND RELATIVE TRANQUILITY IN WHICH 1977 WAS BETTER THAN 1976. LOCAL ECONOMIC SITUATION CAUSED NO ONE DISTRESS EXCEPT SOCIALISTS WHO CONJURED UP VISION OF ECONOMY UPON BRINK OF COLLAPSE.

2. MOST STRIKING IMPRESSION OF VISIT TO PREFECT, MAYOR, MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION, DC FARM AND PARTY LEADERS, PCI AND SOCIALIST LEADERS IS GROWING ACCEPTANCE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN DC AND PCI. CONVERSATIONS TOOK PLACE DAY FOLLOWING

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ROME DC PARTY DEBATE AND DECISION INCLUDE PCI IN PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. NEVERTHELESS, DC LEADERS HAD TO BE PROMPTED TO REACT TO MAJOR NATIONAL EVENT.

3. BIGGEST SINGLE DC BLOC IN VICENZA IS SMALL FARM OWNERS ORGANIZATION (COLTIVATORI DIRETTI) LONG MOST CONSERVATIVE OF DC PILLERS. ITS YOUNGISH PRESIDENT AND VENETO MINISTER

FOR AGRICULTURE AND HIS AGGRESSIVE AND ABLE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BOTH OPPOSED DC DECISION FORM GOVERNMENT WITH PCI SUPPORT. NO DOUBT IN THEIR MINDS THAT IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS PREFERABLE. THEY WANTED NATIONAL REFERENDUM TYPE CAMPAIGN ON PCI WHICH THEY CONFIDENT PUBLIC WOULD REJECT RETURNING DC TO MAJORITY.

4. VICENZA'S EARLY MIDDLE AGE MAYOR, ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON AND MORO BACKER, STRONGLY DISAGREED AS DID 35-YEAR OLD DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY A BISAGLIA/PICCOLI SUPPORTER. THEY SEPARATELY ARGUED THAT EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD CHANGE NOTHING FOR BETTER. DC WOULD NOT GAIN ENOUGH TO GOVERN WITHOUT PCI AND CRAXI EFFORTS REBUILD PSI, WHICH THEY SAW AS KEY TO ALTERNATIVE TO PCI, WOULD HAVE BEEN RUINED. IN VICENZA, THEY SAID, DC WOULD DO WELL TO HOLD ITS ALREADY HIGH 62.7PC OF VOTE AND PCI WOULD SURELY GAIN. BETTER TO BUY TIME IN HOPE THAT PSI COULD SOMEHOW BECOME A VIABLE AND WILLING PARTNER ONCE MORE.

5. SOCIALISTS, IN CUSTOMARILY DRAB AND MISERABLE OFFICES WHICH CONTRAST WITH EFFICIENT, WELL-MAINTAINED AND GOOD LOOKING HEAD-QUARTERS OF DC AND PCI, CLAIMED CRAXI WOULD SWEEP TURIN CONGRESS WITH 70PC OF DELEGATES AND THAT 95PC OF VICENZA GROUP BEHIND HIM. DISCUSSION WITH YOUNG PSI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY AND PSI MP DID NOT SUGGEST MUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR RETURN TO ALLIANCE WITH DC, HOWEVER. THEUP BITTER, DOCTRINAIRE ATTITUDE TOWARD DC AND PCI PARALLELED POORLY CONCEALED HOSTILITY TOWARD US AS WELL.

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5. COMMUNIST PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, GIUSEPPE PUPILLO IS ABOUT 35, WELL AND CONSERVATIVELY DRESSED FORMER MEMBER PSI AND PSIUP FROM ROME. HIS DEPUTY WAS YOUNG WOMAN OF ABOUT SAME AGE. MEETING IN NEWLY RENOVATED VICENZA PCI HEADQUARTERS, THEY WERE FRIENDLY, SPOKE EASILY AND FIELDING MOST THORNY QUESTIONS WITHOUT FLINCHING.

6. PUPILLO VOLUNTEERED THAT PCI PASSING THROUGH PERIOD OF REVISING ITS VIEWS. VERY OFTEN, IDEAS CAME FROM NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND WERE DEBATED THROUGHOUT PARTY. HE ARGUED THAT PCI TODAY LED BY NEW GENERATION OF ITALIANS WHO HAD GROWN UP WITHIN POST-WAR ITALIAN DEMOCRATIC STATE. THEY SAW IT AS NORMAL WAY OF LIFE AND VIEWED LENINISM AS CONCEPT FROM ANOTHER TIME IN HISTORY THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN MODIFIED BY GRAMSCI. HE WAS OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFT WHICH CLAIMED THAT ITALY WAS A POLICE STATE, THE WORKING CLASS OPPRESSED AND THAT THE STATE HAD TO BE DESTROYED. THAT WAS ABSURD. THE DEMOCRATIC STATE HAD ITS FAULTS. BUT THEY HAD TO BE CORRECTED BY REFORM.

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7. PCI HAD BEEN HAVING HARD TIME IN VICENZA WITH TRADE UNION POLICY. CISL AND FAR LEFT HAD BEEN LEADING OPPOSITION TO NEW NATIONAL TRADE UNION POLICY AND APPLICATION LOCALLY WOULD BE TOUGH. YET IT WAS FOOLISH TO TAKE INFLEXIBLE POSITION ON KEEPING JOBS IF THERE NO WORK TO BE DONE. ITALY HAD TO CREATE NEW SYSTEM TO FACILITATE LABOR MOBILITY INCLUDING JOB RE-TRAINING.

8. VICENZA SITUATION, PUBILLO CONTINUED, WAS SURELY EXCEPTIONAL. LOCAL INDUSTRY WAS AGGRESSIVELY MANAGED BY MODERN OWNERS WITH WHOM PCI COULD DEAL ON PRACTICAL PROBLEMS. THEY WERE DIVIDED ON DOCTRINE BUT READY TO COOPERATE ON DAILY NEEDS.

9. AS FOR POLITICAL OUTLOOK, PCI SECRETARY SEEMED NEUTRAL ABOUT EARLY ELECTIONS. HE SAID DC WOULD PROBABLY NOT LOSE VOTES AND THAT PCI WOULD GAIN A LITTLE ON NEARLY 15PC OF VOTE IT CARRIED IN 1976. HE SAID HE HOPED MINOR PARTIES WOULD NOT BE WIPED OUT SINCE HE FELT THEY HAD IMPORTANT CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ROLE IN ITALIAN DEMOCRACY. HIS EXPERIENCE IN PSI AND PSIUP HAD LEFT HIM WITH LASTING RESPECT FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION.

10. PUPILLO REJECTED ARGUMENT THAT PCI LACKING IN INTERNAL DEMOCRACY. HE INSISTED THAT ALL ISSUES DEBATED FROM TOP TO BOTTOM AND THAT PARTY MOVED BY CONSENSUS. THERE WERE NO CONFIDENTIAL

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ACKNOWLEDGED FACTIONS AS IN DC. BUT HE CLAIMED DC INTERNAL DIFFERENCES USUALLY CENTERED ON QUESTIONS OF PATRONAGE AND POWER RATHER THAN UPON ISSUES OF POLICY WHICH LEFT IN DOUBT WHETHER IT MUCH MORE DEMOCRATIC INTERNALLY THAN HIS OWN PARTY.

11. BOTH DC PROVINCIAL SECRETARY AND DC MAYOR, ALTHOUGH REPRESENTING DIFFERENT PARTY FACTIONS, RELUCTANTLY ENDORSED COOPERATION WITH PCI AS ONLY PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE. MAYOR REPEATED ANALYSIS HE HAD MADE IN JUNE 1977 SAYING THAT LOCAL PCI OFFICIALS WERE PEOPLE WITH WHOM HE AND OTHERS HAD ATTENDED SCHOOL. THEY WERE LEFTTIME ACQUAINTANCES WHOSE DEMOCRATIC LOYALTY HE COULD NOT DOUBT. THERE WERE PROFOUND DIFFERENCES ABOUT PHILOSOPHY AND HE, A CATHOLIC, COULD NEVER ACCEPT MARXISM. BUT ON PRACTICAL LEVEL THEY HAD TO WORK TOGETHER.

12. MAYOR SAID THAT WHILE DC ALONE HAD 50PC OF SEATS IN CITY COUNCIL AND WITH PRI HAD CLEAR MAJORITY, CITY COULD NOT BE GOVERNED ON NUMERICAL BASIS. HE HAD TO HAVE PCI COOPERATION. THUS, HE TOOK TIME TO NEGOTIATE ALL POLICY ISSUES WITH PCI, PSDI AND PLI BEFORE CITY COUNCIL ACTED. ONLY PSI INSISTED ON REMAINING IN OPPOSITION. THIS WAS NOT LIKE PROSPECTIVE NATIONAL FORMULA SINCE PCI THEORETICALLY NOT NEEDED FOR MAJORITY. BUT IT WAS DEFACTO INCLUSION IN MAJORITY.

13. SUMMING UP VICENZA DISCUSSIONS, SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS STAND OUT. FIRST, LEADERSHIP OF DC, PCI AND PSI NOW ALL IN HANDS OF VERY NEW GENERATION IN MID-THIRTIES. PSI LAST TO MOVE AND NEW PCI SECRETARY SAID TO BE BERLINGUER BACKER MUCH DIFFER-

ENT FROM HIS OLDER, MORE HARD LINE PREDECESSOR. SECOND, EVEN IN ARA WHERE DC HAS LARGE MAJORITY, COOPERATION WITH PCI SEEN AS NECESSARY BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. NEITHER MAYOR NOR DC SECRETARY FELT THAT INCLUSION OF PCI IN NATIONAL MAJORITY

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WOULD COST DC VOTES. THIRD, VICENZA LEADERSHIP ACROSS BOARD VERY IMPRESSIVE YOUNGER GENERATION OF LIVELY, FAST-MOVING AND MODERN MEN. AND CONVERSATIONS WITH ALL REFLECTED MUCH CONSCIOUS COMMITMENT TO WESTERN DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. ARTICULATION OF PRIMARY DEMOCRATIC VALUES BY EVERYONE FROM PREFECT TO FARM LEADERS AND INCLUDING COMMUNISTS PROJECTS IMAGE OF LOCAL SOCIETY THAT WOULD BE CREDIT TO ANY COUNTRY IN WEST.FINA

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